



## Green Pet Care

By Lara Jackson

**If you're a pet owner, there are many things you can do to extend your ecofriendly philosophy** as presented by

representatives from the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of Chicago at the recent seminar "Green Pet Care" at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library in Arlington Heights, Ill.

**The number one ecofriendly pet suggestion was to "consider recycling a pet."** There are between six and eight million dogs and cats in animal shelters per year; and, of that number four million animals are euthanized annually. So, give a dog or a cat, or another animal, a second chance and adopt a shelter animal. Food is another important ecofriendly factor. It's suggested to purchase food in bulk – this saves on packaging and reduces waste. Locally-sourced organic food is another option. Raw food is another great alternative, but make sure you talk with your veterinarian first and some dogs can tolerate a vegetarian diet, which is less harmful to the Earth. But, dogs only – cats are natural carnivores and need to eat meat to survive. Also, read the food label! A good rule of thumb is to concentrate on the first five ingredients – make sure you can pronounce the items – if you can, then these items should be fine for your pet.

**For the cat lovers out there** – ninety-five percent of the litter out on the market is clay litter, which comes from strip mines and is not biodegradable. There are many alternatives out there – from wheat to pine to corn to recycled newspapers all which work just as well or better than clay litter. Many of these alternative types of litter are clumping litter. Also, use less litter – it saves money and "cats need very little ground to cover their matter", which was stated in the seminar.

"Never flush cat litter down the toilet because it can clog the pipes and cats' fecal matter contains a toxic bacteria called toxoplasmosis," a representative stated in the seminar.

There are approximately 74 million dogs in the United States and these dogs produce about three-quarters of a pound of waste per dog per day. Twenty to 30 percent of pollutants in waterways are attributed to dog waste. The number one solution is picking up after your dog – in biodegradable waste bags. There are many degradable and biodegradable "poop bags" out there for dog owners to choose from.

The seminar went on to present many other great ideas including making your own pet toys – one example was buying a bamboo stick and tying a cut-up old clothing remnant and then buying a sort of “string feather” and attaching these to the stick and you have a great toy for kitty to bat at! Also, there are many alternative ecofriendly bedding, leashes and collars and bowls out there including using stainless steel and ceramic bowls. And, as far as cleaning is concerned you can use the “fantastic four” just like you do for your own cleaning – baking soda, vinegar, salt and lemon juice do wonders – you can add a little alcohol for a disinfectant.

**So, don't forget the animals when you're going green!**

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